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CURRENT STATUS OF THE HUNGARIAN RAILWAY SYSTEM

The expansion of MAV (Magyar Allamvasutak, Hungarian State Railways) for Soviet military purposes was analyzed in the December 1952 issue of Hadak Utjan [see 00-W-26854]. The present article serves as a supplement thereto and as a survey of the current status of the Hungarian railway system.

Since 1953, the expansion and modernization of railway lines of military importance have continued according to the plans discussed in the above-mentioned article. Preparations have been made for increasing the number of east-west and north-south railroad bridges across the Danube and the Tisza rivers. The electrification of the Budapest-Hatvan line should be completed soon, and the double-tracked Budapest-Szekesfehervar line is ready for operation, while the modernization of the Hegyeshalom-Budapest-Zahony trunk line, to be equipped with automatic block signals, is progressing rapidly. The Komarom railroad bridge has been rebuilt, and the northern railroad bridge at Budapest was put in operation at the end of May.

The construction of the new north-south lines on both sides of the Danube (the Paks-Tolnamozs-Bata-Mohacs, and the Baja-Dunafoldvar--Kalocsa lines) is extremely significant, and plans for a Danube bridge at Kalocsa are now being prepared.

Although the Retszilas-Sztalinvaros line has been completed and is now in operation, the construction of other lines is progressing very slowly, and plans for new double-tracking, including the Kisujszallas-Zahony line, have been balked by a shortage of rails. According to reports, the construction of the Tiszapolgar-Hejobaba line (on the Mezocsat branch line) and efforts to raise the axial pressure of its tracks have been further delayed by material shortages.

One of the more important aspects of modernizing the railway system is the expansion of classification yards. Zahony has become one of the best equipped transshipping points of the Satellites, because most freight shipments between Hungary and the USSR are handled there. The facilities at Nyiregyhaza are as modern as those at Zahony; however, the distance between the two stations is enough to justify plans for the construction of another classification yard, probably at Tuzser.

The classification yard at Miskolc has been greatly expanded as a result of the heavy industrialization of Borsod Megye. The first modern retarders, as well as completely new switching equipment of Hungarian manufacture and design, have been installed at the Miskolc hump yard. To reduce the work load of the Miskolc yard, a classification yard is under construction at Sajoszentpeter.

To remedy the delay of shipments routed through Budapest Ferencvaros, a new classification yard, the Eastern Yard, has been built next to and partially above the old yard; horizontal expansion was limited by dwelling units, so a two-level yard was constructed. The new yard, equipped with automatic switches and 70-80 ton hydraulic retarders which are about 20 meters long, should be capable of handling over 8,000 cars per day.

Improvement of the Rakos, Hatvan, Szekesfehervar, and Debrecen yards is in progress, and plans have been made to enlarge the Ozd, Fuzesabony, Kisterenye, Kal-Kapolna, Sopron, Veszprem, Celldomolk, Zalaegerszeg, Kalocsa, Lakitelek, Kiskoros, and Retszilas stations. Three stations have been built at Sztalinvaros.

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Since the war, Hungary has tried to relieve the shortage of rolling stock by repairing war-damaged equipment, by reacquiring stock that was taken from the country, and by manufacturing new equipment. Despite all efforts, the shortage is still acute, and even the shortening of the average turnaround time of freight cars has failed to alleviate the situation.

The heavy demands placed on the rolling stock and the lack of time and facilities for proper maintenance have caused the rolling stock to depreciate seriously. To make matters worse, there is a shortage of spare parts and other repair materials, as well as of the necessary high-grade lubricants. Thus, it has proven fruitless to increase the number of cars to over 50,000 and to force down the average car turnabout time to less than 4 days. Briefly, the shortage of rolling stock is MAV's most urgent problem.

The manufacture of heavy locomotives for the USSR continues apace at the MAVAG (Magyar Allami Vas-, Acel-, es Gepgyar; Hungarian State Iron, Steel, and Machine Works) locomotive factory. By the end of 1954, more than 1,200 locomotives of the 0-5-0 type had been exported. Because of material and machinery shortages, domestic needs could not be fulfilled.

The trade restrictions on strategic materials and machinery, initiated by the US, caused serious delays in the expansion of the railways from a military viewpoint. Since such restrictions have been eased, however, the work tempo in railway expansion has increased. A new steam locomotive of the 303 series, built to improve express service, and a BOCO universal electric locomotive are now in the testing stage. The excellently constructed general-purpose locomotive of the 424 series and 510 US locomotives purchased from UNRRA now constitute the bulk of Hungary's steam locomotives. The US locomotives were given the series No 411. By the end of 1954, MAV's stock of steam and electric locomotives should have equaled that of 1914.

Since MAV is the largest consumer of coal in Hungary, the coal situation should be mentioned. Coal production has been raised by almost 30 percent, but the heavy demands of industrialization have kept coal in short supply. In consequence of the low-grade coal supplied to the railroads, the trains are always late, and rail traffic is always snarled. The loss of man-hours and the delay of freight shipments caused thereby has constituted a serious threat to the Hungarian economy.

The manufacture of a so-called "artificial coal" has relieved the plight of MAV to a certain extent. A by-product of the petroleum industry, the artificial coal is a mixture of crude fuel oil, peat, and third-rate coal, which produces 5,000 - 6,000 calories per kilogram. By the end of 1954, 1,000 tons of the mixture were produced per day.

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